



ST. JOSEPH COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

St. Joseph County Department of Health

"Promoting physical and mental health and facilitating the prevention of disease, injury, and disability for all St. Joseph County residents"

PROCESS FOR OBTAINING A RESIDENTIAL SEPTIC PERMIT

A permit from the Department of Health must be obtained to install, replace, or repair a septic system. This is required to protect the property owner, our drinking water supplies, and public health.

The improper design or installation of a septic system can cause it to fail in less than one year and can cause contamination of our drinking water supplies. The Department of Health follows a careful process to help ensure each new system is installed correctly. Priority is given to residences where the existing system has failed.

The following must be performed to obtain a permit for a residential property.

1. The property owner obtains a soil report from a certified soil scientist. Three complete soil borings from the area of the new septic system are required. The Department of Health can provide a list of the soil scientists registered to do work in St. Joseph County.
2. The owner submits soil reports, a permit application, and a non-refundable permit fee to the Department of Health. The owner may authorize a septic installer to perform this task for them. **The Department of Health accepts cash, Master Card or Visa, money orders, cashiers checks & business checks. Personal checks are not accepted. Permit fees are shown below.**
3. The Department of Health issues minimum design specifications for the system. The specifications will be sent to the person designated on the application.
4. The owner gives the specifications to licensed septic installers so they may design a system and provide the owner with a bid for the work. The Department of Health recommends that everyone obtain at least two bids.
5. For new construction (homes not yet constructed) the area of the proposed septic system must be roped off with steel posts, rope, and signs according to the Department of Health's standard requirements prior to submitting the design. **If the site is not roped off, the application will be rejected.**
6. The contractor selected by the owner to install the system submits a design to the Department of Health for review and approval. The designs must comply with State law, County Code, and the specifications and drawing requirements issued by the Department of Health.
7. Occasionally a contractor will identify a way to construct the system that is in compliance with State and County laws but differs from the specifications issued by the Department of Health. If this occurs the contractor must submit a **Variance Request** with the proposed designs/drawings and the Department of Health will consider the proposal.

Please send all electronic correspondence for the Environmental Health Unit to envirohd@sjcindiana.com

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8. The Department of Health conducts a site inspection and reviews the designs. Deficient designs are returned to the contractor for revision. The revision of designs is the most common cause of lengthy delays in the process.
9. The Department of Health prepares site-specific approval requirements, as necessary, and issues a permit.
10. The Contractor installs the system according to State and County laws and the requirements in the permit.
11. If a contractor encounters something in the field which prevents the system from being installed according to the requirements in the permit, the contractor immediately calls the Department of Health so that a course of action can be determined to fulfill the permit.
12. No deviation from the permit is allowed unless approved in advance.
13. The contractor calls the Department of Health 24 hours in advance of when the installation will be ready for an inspection. For certain types of systems, the Department of Health will perform several inspections of the system at various stages of construction. **The contractor must contact the Department of Health in advance if the system is not going to be ready for inspection at the time arranged.**
14. Upon a final inspection by the Department of Health and a determination that it appears the system was installed according to all requirements; the Department of Health approves the system and the owner may begin using the system.

The Department of Health gives priority to residents with failed systems and to residents that have extenuating circumstances. The following are typical time frames for each major step in the process.

Property owner obtaining soil borings from a soil scientist:	Up to 10 days
Department of Health issuing specifications after receipt of application:	Up to 5 days
Property owner obtaining estimates and a design from a septic installer:	Up to 10 days
Department of Health issuing a permit after receipt of a complete design:	Up to 5 days
Installation of the system is dependent on weather and contractor availability.	

Permit application fees for residential construction are as follows:

Residential New Construction Installation	\$275
Residential Replacement Installation	\$275
Residential Repair	\$100

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